



Request for Applications



RFA # 003-PDG-2020

TITLE: Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) Renewal Grant Needs Assessment Update

FUNDING AGENCY: NC DHHS/Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE)

ISSUE DATE: December 14, 2020

RECEIPT DEADLINE: Applications, subject to the following conditions, must be received no later than **5:00 pm, January 22, 2021.**

EMAIL an electronic PDF of your application to the NC Division of Child Development and Early Education via this email: DCDEE.PDGContracts.Unit.RFA@dhhs.nc.gov.

The signature of an authorized official is required on the application face sheet. An electronic signature or an electronic scanned copy of the signed application face sheet will be accepted. **Only electronic application submissions via email will be accepted, i.e., do not mail, fax, or deliver copies of the application to DCDEE's physical or mailing address.**

INTENT TO APPLY: Eligible agencies and/or organizations interested in applying for this RFA are encouraged to notify DCDEE of their intent to apply via the following link, (https://northhealth.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bKMjENqgCKOCNDf) no later than **5:00 pm on January 4, 2021.** Agencies are **not** required to notify of their intent to respond to this RFA, but are encouraged to do so to assist DCDEE in planning.

DIRECT ALL INQUIRIES concerning this RFA in writing to:

Tilneil Gary, PDG Grant Manager

Email address: DCDEE.PDGContracts.Unit.RFA@dhhs.nc.gov

Sharon Johnson, PDG Contracts Manager

Email address: DCDEE.PDGContracts.Unit.RFA@dhhs.nc.gov

IMPORTANT NOTE: Questions concerning the specifications, or any information contained within this Request for Applications must be received no later than **5:00 pm, January 4, 2021.** All questions must be received in writing via electronic mail to: DCDEE.PDGContracts.Unit.RFA@dhhs.nc.gov. Responses to all questions received by the deadline will be posted on the Division of Child Development and Early Education website <https://ncchildcare.ncdhhs.gov/Whats-New> no later than **5:00 pm, January 11, 2021.**

ELIGIBILITY: This RFA is open to state agencies and universities, public and private nonprofit organizations with a current 501(c)(3) standing with knowledge of North's Carolina's early childhood education mixed delivery system and expertise in conducting research and presenting data, providing consultation to state and local government agencies/personnel and providing analysis of emerging conditions and child well-being.

FUNDING AVAILABILITY: A contract will be awarded from this RFA over an initial 9-month period of funding, with the opportunity to extend for up to 6 additional months depending on the availability funds. Up to \$380,500 will be available for the initial funding period of April 1, 2021, through December 30, 2021, and up to \$100,000 may be available for a second funding period of January 1, 2022, through June 30, 2022.

Should a carry forward or no cost extension option be granted to DCDEE by the federal funder, the same option will be available to the contractor.

This RFA will provide funds to update NC's PDG B-5 Needs Assessment completed in 2019.

DCDEE will determine the actual funding amount based on the proposed execution of the project and the utilization of funds as outlined in the successful applicant's proposal, pending funding availability.

Preschool Development Grant B-5 Renewal Grant Funding Source:

1. Funding Type	Discretionary
2. Federal Award Identification Number (FAIN)	90TP0056-01-00
3. Federal Award Date (see § 200.39 Federal award date)	12/27/2019
4. Total Amount of the Federal Award (awarded to DCDEE)	\$13,414,500
5. Federal award project description, as required to be responsive to the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA)	PDG B-5 Renewal Grants seek to empower state governments to lead the way in leveraging federal, state and local early care and education investments. Renewal grants will assist states in helping low-income and disadvantaged children to enter kindergarten prepared to succeed. In addition, these grants will help improve the transitions between early care and education settings and elementary school. The overall responsibility of the PDG B-5 Renewal Grant is to assist states in the coordination of existing early childhood funding streams, resulting in services being provided to more children birth through five in a mixed delivery system.
6. Name of Federal awarding agency, pass-through entity, and contact information for awarding official	US DHHS Administration for Children and Families Office of Child Care NC DHHS/DCDEE

	333 Six Forks Road Raleigh, North Carolina 27609
7. CFDA Number and Name; the pass-through entity must identify the dollar amount made available under each Federal award and the CFDA number at the time of disbursement	CFDA# 93.434 ESSA Preschool Development Grants Birth Through Five
8. Identification of whether the award is R&D	No

Federal Requirements on indirect cost rates and calculations according to 2 C.F.R. 200.414:

1. If your agency has or establishes a Federal Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate (FNIR), then the agency is not allowed to charge the “de minimis” rate of 10% (or some other amount) for indirect costs, as directed by 2 C.F.R. 200.414(f).
2. Agencies with an FNIR are required to charge their agreed upon rate for their indirect costs and include cost items as determined by the FNIR in their indirect costs.
3. If your agency does not have and never had a FNIR, then your agency is allowed to negotiate a different rate or the “de minimis,” as per 2 C.F.R. 200.414(f).
4. Negotiation of indirect cost rates in excess of the “de minimis” rate of 10% are performed by the NC DHHS Office of the Controller, Cost Analysis and Administration section:

Cost Analysis/Federal Financial Reporting/Administration
DHHS Office of the Controller
NC Department of Health and Human Services
1050 Umstead Dr
Raleigh, NC 27699-2019
Phone: 919-855-3696

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I. INTRODUCTION

In 2019, North Carolina's Preschool Development Grant, Birth through Five (PDG B-5) Needs Assessment ¹was approved by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF). The PDG B-5 Needs Assessment was developed in collaboration with numerous partners, including Early Childhood Education (ECE) agencies, providers, specialists such as Smart Start, Head Start/Early Head Start, the Cherokee Tribal Community, the Salvation Army, and families of young children. Existing data and reports addressing needs of and services for NC families with children birth to age five were reviewed, listening sessions were held with families representing key target populations living in both urban and rural counties, and ECE providers statewide were surveyed to gather information about services and barriers.

Four primary themes emerged through the Needs Assessment data collection activities: 1) providing high-quality early childhood care and education, 2) ensuring children are on track for school success, 3) fostering social-emotional resilience, and 4) creating conditions for supportive and supported families. The strengths and gaps identified in the Needs Assessment were used to develop recommendations to guide NC's PDG B-5 Strategic Plan and PDG Renewal Grant activities.

The Needs Assessment and the subsequent PDG B-5 Strategic Plan both align with the state's Early Childhood Action Plan, which establishes a collective ECE framework for shared accountability to achieve measurable, statewide goals for children birth through age eight by 2025.

II. BACKGROUND

In December 2019, the Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE) was awarded funding through the [Preschool Development Grant, Birth through Five](#) (PDG B-5) to implement strategies in alignment to the following six required activities in effort to strengthen its early childhood education system:

1. Update the state's B-5 Needs Assessment to inform ongoing planning to strengthen the early childhood system.
2. Update the state's B-5 Strategic Plan to ensure the state's early childhood system best meets the needs of young children, especially those who are most vulnerable.
3. Maximize parent and family choice and knowledge about the state's mixed delivery system of existing programs and providers.
4. Share best practices among ECE providers by increasing collaboration and efficiency of services, including improving transitions across ECE services and programs.

¹ Franco, X., Yazejian, N., LaForett, D., Peisner-Feinberg, E., Kasprzak, C., Bryant, D., Williams, S., Loza, S., De Marco, A., Hong, S.S., Bratsch-Hines, M., Harradine, C., and Reid, K. (2019a) *North Carolina Statewide Birth-5, Needs Assessment: Final Report*. (Frank Porter Graham Institute, UNC-Chapel Hill).

5. Improve the overall quality of ECE programs and services in the state.
6. Support continuous quality improvement through implementing the program performance evaluation plan and leveraging data to examine the results of grant activities.

The PDG B-5 Renewal Grant Notice of Funding Availability says that states will build on activities conducted in the PDG B-5 planning year, including states' work on Activity 1:

Refining and enhancing statewide, birth through five needs assessments by ensuring they are updated periodically, not less than once during the renewal grant period, and exploring additional elements not previously assessed by or identified as initial gaps related to the availability and quality of existing programs in the state, including programs serving the most vulnerable or underserved populations and children in rural areas, and implementing a collaborative state data system to strengthen and enhance information on children and family needs.

In accordance with Activity 1, DCDEE seeks a contractor to update the initial PDG B-5 Needs Assessment to provide current data for coordinated planning by DCDEE and partners across NC's ECE system. The contractor will collect data in order to provide updates and explore additional elements not previously assessed or identified in these goal areas that frame NC's B-5 Strategic Plan and PDG Renewal activities:

Goal 1: High quality early learning - Babies, toddlers and young children across North Carolina will be able to participate in high quality early learning programs.

Goal 2: On track for school success - Young children across North Carolina will reach their developmental goals by the time they enter kindergarten.

Goal 3: Supportive and supported families and communities - Families with babies and toddlers across North Carolina feel supported, are engaged in early learning, and are connected to the resources they need.

Goal 4: Fostering social-emotional health and resilience - Babies, toddlers, and young children across North Carolina will express, recognize, and manage their emotions in a healthy way, especially under stress.

Resources: An applicant may find the following resources linked below (and/or included as an attachment to this RFA) helpful in preparing a successful application narrative.

- The PDG B-5 Renewal Grant Application, outlining planned projects for each of the six required activities, including updating the B-5 Needs Assessment, is accessible at https://ncchildcare.ncdhhs.gov/Portals/0/documents/pdf/N/NC_2019_PDG_Renewal_Grant_File.pdf?ver=2020-01-17-143357-720.

- The PDG B-5 Needs Assessment is accessible at:
https://ncchildcare.ncdhhs.gov/Portals/0/documents/pdf/N/NC_Statewide_Birth-5_Needs_Assessment_Report_Final_31120.pdf?ver=2020-04-03-151528-233.
- The PDG B-5 Strategic Plan is accessible at:
https://ncchildcare.ncdhhs.gov/Portals/0/documents/pdf/N/NC_PDG_B-5_Strategic_Plan.pdf.
- The North Carolina Early Childhood Action Plan is accessible at
<https://www.ncdhhs.gov/about/departments-initiatives/early-childhood/early-childhood-action-plan>.
- The [funding opportunity announcement](#) for the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five, solicitation number HHS-2019-ACF-OCC-TP-1567
- The PDG B-5 Program Performance Evaluation Plan (PPE) is accessible at
https://ncchildcare.ncdhhs.gov/Portals/0/documents/pdf/N/NC_PDG_B-5_PPE_Evaluation_Plan.pdf.

III. **SCOPE OF SERVICES**

The purpose of this RFA is to contract with an entity to update NC's statewide B-5 Needs Assessment to provide comprehensive information to guide North Carolina's strategic planning efforts to strengthen its early childhood system and services.

DCDEE seeks a Contractor who will:

1. Review information/data summarized in the initial PDG B-5 Needs Assessment from other needs assessments or reports and identify any new data available for updating or adding to the PDG B-5 Needs Assessment. This includes any updated data from the following sources:
 - The Pritzker Children's Initiative and Zero to Three's Think Babies™ Project which have conducted various needs assessments to understand the policies and services that support infants and toddlers.
 - UNC-Chapel Hill's recently completed landscape analysis of NC's home visiting (HV) services, which identifies, for example, areas of the state where there is a high need but low provision of HV services.
 - Child Care Services Association's periodic ECE workforce survey in North Carolina.
 - The Pathways project's identified metrics and strategies to support children's ability to read on grade level by third grade.

- Head Start grantees' and various state agencies' periodic needs assessments conducted for federally- and state-funded programs.
 - The NC Early Childhood Action Plan (ECAP). The Needs Assessment must align with and build on the measures in the ECAP that track progress towards meeting ECE goals.
2. Review and update the following from the initial PDG B-5 Needs Assessment as needed:
 - Definition of key terms, including quality early childhood care and education, availability, vulnerable or underserved, and children in rural areas.
 - Description of populations of children who are vulnerable or underserved, and children in rural areas.
 - Important trends in North Carolina to provide context for the Needs Assessment update.
 3. Provide updates on current quality and availability of early childhood care and education, including availability for vulnerable or underserved children and children in rural areas.
 4. Provide updates, to the extent practicable, on the unduplicated number of children being served in existing programs and the unduplicated number of children awaiting service in such programs.
 5. Provide updated information on gaps identified in data or research about the quality and availability of programming and supports for children B-5, considering the needs of working families, and those who are seeking employment or in job training. A particular focus is identifying data about vulnerable children.
 6. Provide updated information on or description of the gaps in data or research that are most important for the state to fill in order to meet the goals of supporting collaboration between programs and services and maximizing parental choice. This includes data that is needed for the PDG B-5 Strategic Plan and PDG B-5 Program Performance Evaluation.
 7. As needed, update the state's current measurable indicators of progress that align with the state's vision and desired outcomes.
 8. Provide updates on key concerns or issues related to ECE facilities.
 9. Provide updated analysis or description of the barriers to the funding and provision of high-quality early childhood care and education services and supports, and identify opportunities for more efficient use of resources.

10. Provide updated information on or description of transition supports and gaps that affect how children move between early childhood care and education programs and school entry.
11. Coordinate efforts with the PDG B-5 Program Performance Evaluation and PDG B-5 Strategic Plan to ensure that data contributes to continuous quality improvement and guides the work of PDG Renewal activities.
12. The Contractor will be guided by and communicate regularly with a small advisory group who will help refine the Needs Assessment scope of work and work plan, identify current sources of data and recent related needs assessments, and help identify next steps to address various gaps identified in the assessment.
13. Conduct inclusive focus groups with diverse representation of families and ECE providers to obtain information needed to update the Needs Assessment and described in this Scope of Services. The Contractor will include the projected number of focus groups to be conducted in the budget information submitted.
 - ECE provider representation will include diversity by type (family child care homes and child care centers); age group (infant-toddler, preschool); geography (rural, suburban, urban); those who provide services for children in low-income families; and by shift of care needed.
 - Family representation will include families of vulnerable children in urban, rural, and tribal areas – in addition to families of vulnerable children experiencing homelessness.
14. Prepare a written PDG B-5 Needs Assessment Update report that summarizes relevant updated or new information and data; identifies gaps; and offers recommendations about next steps in addressing the needs.
15. Participate in statewide planning efforts throughout the contract period as requested by DCDEE to provide input based on findings of the PDG B-5 Needs Assessment Update.
16. Collaborate with DCDEE and the Needs Assessment Advisory Group to establish a process and written plan for managing future updates to the B-5 Needs Assessment to inform impactful and sustainable strategies to improve North Carolina's ECE system – recommending strategies to incorporate the needs assessment process with existing statewide ECE strategic planning efforts.

Estimated Timeline of Outputs:

- By May 2021: Reconvene the Needs Assessment Advisory Group to solicit input and engage stakeholders in planning for updates to the PDG B-5 Needs Assessment.
- By June 2021: Develop a plan for updating the PDG B-5 Needs Assessment, including identifying additional elements not previously assessed for which data is needed.

- By July 2021: Conduct focus groups with ECE providers to assess barriers to providing high quality ECE, to include in the updated Needs Assessment report.
- By July 2021: Conduct focus groups with families of vulnerable children to assess perceptions of the information families receive and their trusted sources, to include in the updated Needs Assessment report.
- By September 2021: Complete an analysis/synthesis of data collected from existing ECE reports and assessments and from focus groups.
- By November 2021: Complete first draft of PDG B-5 Needs Assessment Update.
- By January 2022: Submit final PDG B-5 Needs Assessment Update to DCDEE.
- By March 2022: Assist DCDEE in sharing information on PDG B-5 Needs Assessment Update.
- Through June 2022: Participate in statewide planning efforts that utilize the PDG B-5 Needs Assessment Update, as requested by DCDEE.
- Through June 2022: Collaborate with DCDEE and the Needs Assessment Advisory Group to establish a process and written plan for managing future updates to the B-5 Needs Assessment to inform impactful and sustainable strategies to improve North Carolina's ECE system. This may include identifying resources to support future updates and recommendations for how DCDEE may incorporate the needs assessment process in existing state-wide ECE strategic planning efforts such as the NC Early Childhood Action Plan.

IV. **ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS**

1. **Reports** – Provide data as requested by DCDEE to meet federal reporting requirements and as needed for the state's PDG B-5 Strategic Plan or PDG Program Performance Evaluation. This includes submitting monthly, quarterly and annual reporting by the deadlines provided by DCDEE in order to meet any submission date required from the federal funder.
2. **Feedback** – Providing feedback at least monthly to DCDEE is required throughout the duration of the grant to contribute to continuous quality improvement and monitor ongoing processes and the progress towards the goals and objectives of the project.

V. **APPLICANT QUALIFICATIONS AND CAPACITY**

Applicants must exhibit comprehensive knowledge of early childhood education (ECE) systems, effective policies and practices at all levels of the ECE infrastructure, a demonstrated ability to develop and execute equity focused projects, and program design and assessment expertise. Applicants must be able to work effectively with a variety of ECE stakeholders, including state and local agencies. Preference will be given to applicants with extensive

knowledge of the NC Early Childhood Action Plan and NC's PDG B-5 projects and work. The submission of work products that demonstrate similar or relevant efforts are required.

VI. LINE ITEM BUDGET & NARRATIVE

The applicant will submit two line-item budgets, one for the work the applicant anticipates completing during the 9-month period April 1, 2021, through December 30, 2021, and one for work the applicant anticipates completing during the 6-month period of January 1, 2022, through June 30, 2022, pending funding availability. The budgets must address the cost to complete deliverables outlined in this RFA. A narrative justification must be included for every expense listed in the budgets. Each justification should show how the amount on the line item budget was calculated, and it should be clear how the expense relates to the project's activities. The maximum amount that may be budgeted for April 1, 2021, through December 30, 2021, is \$380,500. The maximum amount that may be budgeted for January 1, 2022, through June 30, 2022, is \$100,000. The total for the two budgets added together may not exceed \$480,500.

Travel Reimbursement Rates

Mileage reimbursement rates must be based on rates determined by the North Carolina Office of State Budget and Management (OSBM). Because mileage rates fluctuate with the price of fuel, the OSBM will release the "Change in IRS Mileage Rate" memorandum to be found on OSBM's website when there is a change in this rate.

For other travel related expenses, please refer to the current rates for travel and lodging reimbursement, presented in the chart below. However, please be advised that reimbursement rates periodically change. DCDEE will only reimburse for rates authorized in OSBM's North Carolina Budget Manual or adopted by means of an OSBM Budget Memo. These documents are located here: https://www.osbm.nc.gov/budman5-travel-policies#TP5_1.

Current Rates for Travel and Lodging

Meals	In State	Out of State
Breakfast	\$8.60	\$8.60
Lunch	\$11.30	\$11.30
Dinner	\$19.50	\$22.20
<i>Total Meals Per Diem Per Day</i>	<i>\$39.40</i>	<i>\$42.10</i>
Lodging (<i>Maximum rate per person, excludes taxes and fees</i>)	\$75.10	\$88.70
Total Travel Allowance Per Day	\$114.50	\$130.80
Mileage	\$0.575 cents per mile	

VII. APPLICATION CONTENT & FORMAT

The submitted electronic application must be formatted to print on 8.5 x 11-inch paper with margins of 1 inch, except for the spreadsheets used in the budget template. Line spacing should be single-spaced. Use Calibri or Times New Roman font **only** no smaller than an 11-point font. All proposals must include the following (** indicates form included in RFA posting*).

- 1) **Application Checklist***: Summarizes the application components to be submitted.
- 2) **Application Face Sheet***: Requires electronic or scanned signature of authorized authority.
- 3) **Proposal Summary**: Provides a brief (3-5 paragraphs) description of the activities the applicant proposes to implement.
- 4) **Introduction to the Applicant Organization/Applicant Qualifications**: Provides a 1-3-page introduction to the applicant's organization, including:
 - The organization's mission, history, and goals;
 - Qualifications, experience, and expertise of key personnel to be assigned to this initiative including up to three work samples; and
 - The organization's experience in the content area specified in the application.
- 5) **Proposal Design, Timeline & Strategies**: Provide a 5-7-page narrative describing the proposed project design and the activities/tasks as described in Section III that will be accomplished with the available resources. Include as part of the scope of services the major tasks, deliverables, and anticipated dates of completion. Identify the key personnel responsible for each task, by position.
- 6) **Collaborative Partners or Subcontractors**: Provide a 1-3-page narrative describing any collaborative partners or subcontractors you plan to work with in the development of a feasibility and cost study. Include partner or subcontractor name, address, and nonprofit or for-profit status. Explain the contributions each partner or subcontractor will make toward this project, including resources. Attach copies of support letters from collaborative partners or subcontractors, if applicable. Requested attachments will not count toward the applicant's page limitations.
- 7) **Line Item Budget*, Detailed Budget Narrative, and FTE Sheet***: Complete and submit two proposed line item budgets according to the format provided with this RFA. The

budgets shall reflect the separate timeframes of April 1, 2021, through December 30, 2021, for up to \$380,500 and January 1, 2022, through June 30, 2022, for up to \$100,000, pending funding availability. When added together, the two budgets may not exceed \$480,500. Also complete a proposed budget narrative that explains in detail all line items in the budget worksheet in accordance with the “DCDEE Line Item Budget & Narrative Instructions.” The FTE worksheet is also required as part of this RFA. Please complete the FTE sheet first so that the line item budget will populate Salary/Fringe values in Column C.

VIII. SELECTION PROCESS

The following is a general description of the process for selecting applications for funding for this initiative. A selection committee chosen by DCDEE will review each application submitted. Upon review of each application the selection committee will assign a numerical rating based on the following:

- 1) **Proposal Summary** (Maximum of **10** points):
Response must reflect the applicant's understanding of and responsiveness to the Scope of Services described in Section III.
- 2) **Applicant Organization(s)/Applicant Qualifications/Partners** (Maximum of **20** points):
Response must reflect the applicant’s history of and capacity for successful completion of conducting assessment and program design with equity focus, as well as demonstrated expertise of North Carolina’s early childhood education (ECE) mixed delivery system and ability to work effectively with a variety of ECE stakeholders. Collaborative partners or subcontractors, if used, should be qualified and have the capacity to provide the services specified.
- 3) **Proposal Design, Timeline & Strategies** (Maximum of **30** points):
Response must reflect how the proposal will allow for the successful completion of an update to NC’s PDG B-5 Needs Assessment. The criteria in Section III must be addressed. Include a timeline of deliverables for the timeframe of April 1, 2021, through December 30, 2021, and a timeline of deliverables for January 1, 2022, through June 30, 2022. The timelines should reflect the activities and strategies that will support completion of an equitable infant toddler early care and education model.
- 4) **Alignment with Year 1 PDG work and NC Early Childhood Action Plan:** (Maximum of **15** points):
Plan must reflect how the project will align with North Carolina’s PDG B-5 Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan completed in the initial phase of the planning grant, the NC Early Childhood Action Plan, and the PDG Program Performance Evaluation. For more information on how to access these documents, see this list of resources outlined in Section II “Background” of this RFA.

- 5) **Commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion:** (Maximum of **10** points):
In alignment to North Carolina's commitment to equity of opportunity for all children, the proposal must reflect the applicant's knowledge and application of diversity, equity and inclusion concepts. Recognizing child outcomes vary disproportionately across race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, physical and developmental ability, and geography, the proposal must clearly demonstrate the applicant's commitment and experience in employing an equity framework in project development and execution.
- 6) **Line Item Budget*, Detailed Budget Narrative and FTE Sheet*:** (Maximum of **15** points):
Budgets must reflect efficient and effective use of financial resources. The proposal must follow all stipulations included in the budget worksheet and narrative instructions. The plan must provide a clear and reasonable justification for all proposed expenditures. Two budgets must be provided to show the funding needed for the first 9 months (up to \$380,500 for April 1, 2021 through December 30, 2021) and for 6 additional months (up to \$100,000 for January 1, 2022, through June 30, 2022, pending funding availability). When added together, the total of both budget periods may not exceed \$480,500. Should a no cost extension be granted to DCDEE by the federal funder to complete PDG activities, the same option will be available to the contractor.

Maximum Points: 100

Any attachments must further demonstrate the applicant's capacity to fulfill the requirements for this project as described. Attachments will not count against the applicant's page limitations. The selection committee will submit recommendations to DCDEE based on the selection process described. The Division will make a final selection and notify all applicants of that selection in writing and/or electronically **no later than 5:00 pm on January 29, 2021.**

IX. APPLICATION PROCUREMENT PROCESS

1. Written questions concerning the RFA specifications will be received until the date specified on the cover sheet of this RFA. A summary of all questions and answers will be posted to DCDEE's website (<http://ncchildcare.nc.gov/>) by **January 11, 2021.**
2. **An electronic submission** of the application must be received from each agency or organization. The submission must include an application face sheet with an electronic or scanned signature by an official authorized to bind the agency or organization in a legal contract.
3. All applications must be received by DCDEE via email not later than the date and time specified on the cover sheet of the RFA. **Paper copies or faxed applications will not be accepted.**
4. The date and time of application receipt will be documented by the date and time shown on the email submission received via DCDEE.PDGContracts.Unit.RFA@dhhs.nc.gov. Budgets

and budget narratives are to be included as part of the application submitted.

5. At their option, the RFA evaluation team may request additional information from any or all applicants for clarification or to support the materials presented in any part of the application. However, agencies and organizations are cautioned that the evaluation team is not required to request clarification; therefore, all applications should be complete and reflect the most favorable terms available from the agency or organization.
6. Applications will be evaluated according to completeness, content, and applicant's documented experience with similar projects, apparent ability of the agencies or organization's staff, and cost. The award of a grant to one agency and organization does not mean that the other applications lacked merit but that, all facts considered, the selected application was deemed to provide the best service to the State.
7. Agencies and organizations are cautioned that this is a request for applications, and the funding agency reserves the unqualified right to reject any and all applications when such rejections are deemed to be in the best interest of the funding agency.
8. **Application Process Summary Dates**
 - 12/14/2020: Request for Applications issued.
 - 01/04/2021: All questions due via email no later than 5 pm.
 - 01/04/2021: Interested applications submit **optional** Notice of Intent no later than 5 pm.
 - 01/11/2021: Answers to Questions posted to the DCDEE website no later than 5 pm.
 - 1/22/2021: Applications must be received via email no later than 5 pm.
 - 01/29/2021: Successful applicant will be notified.
 - 04/01/2021: Contract start date.

X. GENERAL INFORMATION ON SUBMITTING APPLICATIONS

1. Award or Rejection

All complete and timely submitted applications will be evaluated and awards will be made to that agencies or organizations whose combination of budget and service capabilities are deemed to be in the best interest of the funding agency. The funding agency reserves the unqualified right to reject any or all offers if determined to be in its best interest. The successful applicant will be notified by January 29, 2021.

2. Cost of Application Preparation

Any cost incurred by an agency or organization in preparing or submitting an application is the agency or organization's sole responsibility; the funding agency will not reimburse any agency or organization for any pre-award costs incurred.

3. Elaborate Applications

Elaborate applications in the form of brochures or other presentations beyond what is necessary to present a complete and effective application are not desired.

4. Oral Explanations

The funding agency will not be bound by oral explanations or instructions given at any time during the competitive process or after awarding the grant.

5. Reference to Other Data

Only information that is received in response to this RFA will be evaluated; reference to information previously submitted will not be considered.

6. Titles

Titles and headings in this RFA are for convenience only and shall have no binding force or effect.

7. Form of Application

Each application must be submitted utilizing the forms provided by DCDEE, and upon award, these forms will be incorporated into the funding agency's Performance Agreement (contract).

8. Exceptions

All applications are subject to the terms and conditions outlined herein. All responses will be controlled by such terms and conditions. The attachment of other terms and conditions by any agency or organization may be grounds for rejection of that agency or organization's application.

9. Advertising

In submitting its application, agencies and organizations agree not to use the results of the selection process as part of any news release or commercial advertising without prior written approval of DCDEE.

10. Right to Submitted Material

All responses, inquiries, or correspondence relating to or in reference to the RFA, and all other reports, charts, displays, schedules, exhibits, and other documentation submitted by the agency or organization will become the property of the funding agency when received.

11. Competitive Offer

Pursuant to the provision of N.C.G.S. 143-54, and under penalty of perjury, the signer of any application submitted in response to this RFA thereby certifies that this application has not been arrived at collusively or otherwise in violation of either Federal or North Carolina antitrust laws.

12. Agency and Organization's Representative

Each agency or organization shall submit with its application the name, address, and telephone number of the person(s) with authority to bind the agency or organization and answer questions regarding the application.

13. Subcontracting

Agencies and organizations may propose to subcontract portions of work provided that their applications clearly indicate the scope of the work to be subcontracted, and to whom.

14. Proprietary Information

Trade secrets or similar proprietary data which the agency or organization does not wish disclosed to other than personnel involved in the evaluation will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by NCAC TO1: 05B.1501 and G.S. 132-1.3 if identified as follows: Each page shall be identified in boldface at the top and bottom as "CONFIDENTIAL." Any section of the application that is to remain confidential shall also be so marked in boldface on the title page of that section.

15. Participation Encouraged

Pursuant to Article 3 and 3C, Chapter 143 of the North Carolina General Statutes and Executive Order No. 77, the funding agency invites and encourages participation in this RFA by businesses owned by minorities, women and the disabled including utilization as subcontractor(s) to perform functions under this Request for Applications.

16. Gifts Ban

N.C.G.S. 133-32 and Executive Order 24 prohibit the offer to or acceptance by any State Employee of any gift from anyone with a contract with the State, or from any person seeking to do business with the State. By execution of any response to this request, agencies and organizations attest, for the entire organization and its employees or agents, that no such gift has been offered, accepted, or promised by any employees of the organization.

17. Contract/Funds Disbursement

DCDEE will issue a contract to the recipients of the grant that will include their application. Expenditures may begin upon receipt of a fully executed contract and not before that point. To receive compensation, following contract submission and agreement, the selected applicants must submit a monthly reimbursement request to the Division for all expenses incurred.

18. Audit

Please be advised that successful applicants may be required to have an audit in accordance with N.C.G.S. 143C-6-22 and N.C.G.S. 143C-6-23 as applicable to the agency's status.

There are 3 reporting levels which are determined by the total direct grant receipts from all State agencies in the entity's fiscal year:

Level 1: Less than \$25,000

Level 2: At least \$25,000 but less than \$500,000

Level 3: \$500,000 or more. Level 3 grantees are required to submit a "Yellow Book"

audit done by a CPA.

Only Level 3 grantees may include audit expenses on the budget. Audit expenses should be prorated based on the ratio of the grant to the total pass-through funds received by the entity.

19. Additional Documentation to Include with Application

All applicants are required to include documentation of their tax identification number. Those applicants which are private nonprofit agencies are to include a copy of an IRS determination letter regarding the agency's 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status. (This letter normally includes the agency's tax identification number, so it would also satisfy that documentation requirement.)

20. Federal Certifications

Agencies or organizations receiving federal funds are required to execute Federal certifications regarding non-discrimination, Drug-Free Workplace, Environmental Tobacco Smoke, Debarment, Lobbying, and Lobbying Activities.

21. System for Award Management Database (SAM)

All grantees receiving federal funds must be actively registered in the federal government's System for Award Management (SAM) database or be willing to complete the registration process in conjunction with the award (see www.sam.gov). To maintain an active SAM record, the record must be updated no less than annually.

22. Additional Documentation Prior to Contract Execution

Contracts will require additional documentation prior to contract execution. After the award announcement, agencies will be contacted about providing the following documentation:

- a. A completed and signed letter from the agency's Board President/Chairperson identifying individuals authorized to sign contracts.
- b. A completed and signed letter from the agency's Board President/Chairperson identifying individuals authorized to sign expenditure reports.
- c. Documentation of the agency's DUNS number. Documentation consists of a copy of communication (such as a letter or email correspondence) from Dun & Bradstreet (D&B) which indicates the agency or organization's legal name, address, and DUNS number. In lieu of a document from D&B, a copy of the agency or organization's SAM record is acceptable.
- d. If your agency does not have a DUNS number, please use the D&B online registration (<http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>) to receive one free of charge. (DUNS is the acronym for the Data Universal Numbering System developed and regulated by D&B.)

- e. Contracts with private non-profit agencies require additional documentation prior to contract execution. After the award announcement, private non-profit agencies will be contacted about providing the following documentation:
 - i. A completed, signed, and notarized statement which includes the agency's Conflict of Interest Policy.
 - ii. A completed, signed, and notarized page certifying that the agency has no overdue tax debts.
- f. All grantees receiving funds through the State of North Carolina are required to execute Contractor Certifications Required by North Carolina Law. Contractor Certifications should **NOT** be generated, signed or returned with application.

Note: At the start of each calendar year, all agencies with current DCDEE contracts are required to update their contract documentation. These agencies will be contacted a few weeks prior to the due date and will be provided the necessary forms and instructions.

23. Registration with Secretary of State

Private non-profit applicants must also be registered with the North Carolina Secretary of State to do business in North Carolina or be willing to complete the registration process in conjunction with the execution of the contract documents. (See www.secretary.state.nc.us/corporations.)

24. Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) Data Reporting Requirement

The Contractor shall complete and submit to the Division, the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) Data Reporting Requirement form within 10 State Business Days when awarded \$25,000 or more in federal funds.

25. Salary Limitation

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018, (Division H, Title II, Sec. 202), limits the salary amount that may be awarded and charged to ACF grants and cooperative agreements. Award funds issued under this announcement may not be used to pay the salary of an individual at a rate in excess of Executive Level II. The Executive Level II salary of the "Rates of Pay for the Executive Schedule" is \$189,600. This amount reflects an individual's base salary exclusive of fringe benefits and any income that an individual may be permitted to earn outside of the duties of the applicant organization. This salary limitation also applies to subawards and subcontracts under an ACF grant or cooperative agreement.

XI. APPLICATION CHECKLIST

The following items must be included in the application. Please assemble the application in the following order in the format identified in Section VII:

- ☐ Application Checklist – Item 1
- ☐ Application Face Sheet – Item 2
- ☐ Proposal Summary/Design/Evaluation Plan – Item 3
- ☐ List of Subcontractors – Item 4
- ☐ Line Item Budget & FTE Worksheet – Item 5
- ☐ Indirect Cost Rate Approval Letter (if applicable)
- ☐ Letters of Commitment or Statements of Support – Item 6
- ☐ IRS Tax Status Documentation – Item 7
 - a. IRS letter documenting your organization’s tax identification number
 - OR
 - b. IRS determination letter regarding your organization’s 501(c)(3) tax exempt status for private nonprofits